

[Interview with Vito Cacciola #14]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. [Liring?] Living lore in [?. ?.]

TITLE Italian Cobbler, Beverly - #14 (M. R. Lovett.)

DATE 1/0/39 WDS. PP. 5

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview with Vito Cacciola

COMMENTS

Paper No. 14

INTERVIEW

WITH

VITO CACCIOLA

by

Merton R. Lovett

. .

“As well as remembered”

. .

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(from memory) . .

"Happy New Year, Mr. Lovett. I hoba you have good health and mucha gladness.

"I hava pleasant time, I thank you. I no maka de celebrate. I make de music, cooka and eata and searcha my heart.

"That's a right, I no get a headache in de morning.

But I getta drunk just de same. The music mostimes maka me a little dizzy. but it leava no, what you call, a hang above.

"Looka dis picture what I find in de paper. It's de night club. See all de peoples make foolishness. Perhaps de spend five, ten, twenty dollers for nothin?. [ere?] kiddos no getta new shoes. [What?] you tink?

"De mosta Italians no get drunk. De drinks wine or de beer for be sociable. I drinka myself, just de small glass of wine, cognac or annisette."

. . . .

"Nick de Italian man's come see we one nighta last week. He not drunk, but hava two, three whiskey.

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'Congratulate me, Vito,' he say, "I have gooda news. De lawyer say I can getta divorce. It goin' to costa me sixty dollars. I paya cash twenty-five dollars, then fifty cents eacha week.'

"'You's old fool,' I reclaim. 'No,' he say[,?]

"'I'm smarta man. I getta me young wife. She keepa house nice. She cooka me good food. She make me feel young some more.'

"'Hah! Hah!' I reply. 'You meana to tell me dat you getta crazy again. You sixty two years of age. You ain'ta twenty five years no more.'

"'Sure,' Nick maka answer. 'When I see de pretty womens I feela lika boy. My wife no good. For eight years she no liva with me. She no maka de eats. She no sleepa de bed.'

"'But,' I say, 'your wife a gooda woman. Why she leava you? Because you drunk all de time. You maka de fight.

You no giva her money for runa de house. Does you not remember how gooda wife she is? She maka you fine children. She wasa pretty lika a rose. She was sweeta like angel.'

"'Yes, Vito,' he groana. 'She wasa de angel.

Whata I do? I act lika de pig. I sin very much bad. My babies, de grow up with disrespect for dere old man. Whata I do? I hava no children, I hava no wife. I no gooda.

No peoples care does I die. I wisha I was dead.'

"Den he weepa and reproacha hisself. 'I wisha my wife coma back,' he crya. 'I wanta my children. I beena de monkey, de beast. Vito, I giva my soul, does she return-ed.'

"'Well,' I say, 'I tink I can fixa dis trouble.

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I'm goin' praya for you, Nick. De blessed Lord maka miracle.

It's now de time of Christmas. Perhaps you wife feela sorry.

De Christmas spirit maka softa her heart.'

"Do you do thisa for me, Vito? Do you bringa my wife back? No more will I drinka. No more will I cursa.

I feela so glad I treata her like de saint.'

"I trya help you,' I despond. 'I pray to maka end of dis trouble. Your sin o round and round like de music.

First you act like pig and maka disrespect in your children and wife. De disretrust you and holda back de love. Den you feela de lonesome and you is gotta frustrated. You drinka de worse.

De leava you. But I tink I helpa you, Nick. Now we maka some music. Did you forgot how to playa de mandolin?'

"So we playa de music. Once he was de good artist.

But his fingers de shaka. He maka ruin wid whiskey.

He no can maka de tremulo.

"When I goes to bed I praya de good Lord to maka soft his wife's heart. I praya sincere.

"Whata happen, Mr. Lovett? You shall see. You shall see. Nick, he come backa to me the second day after.

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He shouta from joy. His heart is glad. He say, 'My wife she coma to see me last night. My wifa, she visit me.'

"What you do?' I aska Nick.

"I maka de apologize. I tell her I maka reform.

I wanta de wife und de children. I kissa her hand. I giva de money what would paya de bills and buya some dress and shoes.

She say she coma back when I is reform-ed. She liva with me when I maka de promise good.'

"It is lika miracle, Mr. Lovett. He aska me will I maka visit to his wife. Will I maka prayer some more. I tella him I can fixa no more. Now he must helpa de Lord to maka good.

"Nick's children and his grandchildren go seea him too. De talka sweet. De giva him new courage.

"No! His wife no liva with him yet. She go to de house every morning and sweepa. She cooks de supper, but, before Nick getta home from work, she go away. She no ready yet to sleepa in de bed.

"Three nights de husband, he coma see me and talka.

We playa de music. His hands shaka no more. On de mandolin he maka nice tremulo."